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OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE CONTRIBUTION TO:
SE-10 - Soviet Capabilities for Surprise Attack
on the Continental United States Before July 1952

I. What are Soviet Capabilities for a Surprise Attack on the United States Before July 1952?

A. Direct Military Attack.

1. During the period under consideration, the capability of the Soviet surface fleet and merchant marine for weakening, disrupting or destroying the war potential of the United States by surprise attack against the continental U.S. is estimated to be quite limited.
2. Considerations underlying this estimate are:
 - (a) The Soviet coastal warfare force of minor combatant vessels, while numerically large, is entirely unsuited for a surprise transoceanic attack.
 - (b) Although the heavier Soviet surface forces are being strengthened at an appreciable rate in the form of new long-range cruisers and destroyers, they lack the requisite strength and vital carrier-borne air striking power and support for any large-scale transoceanic surprise attack. The Soviets will be totally lacking in aircraft carriers during this period.
 - (c) The present character of the Soviet Merchant Marine, a heterogeneous collection of vessels, many obsolescent, and critically lacking in tankers, largely precludes the possibility of its employment in any large-scale transoceanic surprise attack.
 - (d) The USSR presently lacks the advance base facilities or mobile logistic support requisite for an attack against the U.S. Any attempt to establish advanced bases in the immediate future would eliminate the element of surprise.
3. During this period, however, the USSR will have a total of 370 submarines, of which 104 will be capable of launching a direct attack against the United States. Nineteen ocean patrol submarines will be available to the Soviet Pacific Fleet for an attack against the west coast of the United States, and four high submerged speed and 81 ocean patrol submarines will be available from the Baltic, Northern and Black Sea fleets for an attack on the east coast. The probable courses of action of Soviet submarines to be encountered are:
 - (a) Attacks on merchant shipping and naval vessels.

ONI review(s)
completed.

Review of this document by CIA has
determined that

☐ CIA has no objection to declass

☒ It contains information of CIA

Interest that must remain

classified at TS S 0

Authority: HR 10-2

It contains nothing of CIA

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- (b) Offensive minelaying along shipping routes and in the approaches to principal harbors. These mines could be sown covertly and the first indication of their presence would not occur until one was struck by a ship.
 - (c) Landing of saboteurs and agents.
 - (d) Launching of guided missiles and rockets against coastal targets.
4. The foregoing outlines the major albeit limited attack capabilities of the Soviets from the naval point of view. However, small scale raiding or other diversionary operations in support of a major effort in another direction must not be precluded. This type operation might include such as the employment of disguised surface minelayers in focal sea areas where surveillance and minesweeping forces were, at least initially, inadequate.

B. Clandestine Attack with Weapons of Mass Destruction.

1. ONI believes that this subject is adequately covered in the draft of NIE-31 submitted for consideration except for the following:
- (a) Page 5, para 14 b. should read: "The Soviets also might well employ guided missiles launched from merchant ships and submarines to deliver atomic weapons to near coastal targets, including key harbors."
 - (b) Page 8, para 21 b. should read: "Delivery by guided missiles launched from merchant ships and submarines."

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